

The World Is Too Much with Us

William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,¹
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!²
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan³ suckled in a creed outworn;⁴
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,⁵
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus⁶ rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton⁷ blow his wreathèd horn.

¹ in the past and continuing

² filthy blessing

³ a follower of a religion with many gods

⁴ believing an outdated creed

⁵ meadow

⁶ Greek sea god known for its ability to change form

⁷ Greek sea god known for blowing a shell to control waves

Variation on a Theme by Rilke

Denise Levertov

A certain day became a presence to me;
there it was, confronting me--a sky, air, light:
a being. And before it started to descend
from the height of noon, it leaned over
and struck my shoulder as if with
the flat of a sword, granting me
honor and a task. The day's blow
rang out, metallic--or it was I, a bell awakened,
and what I heard was my whole self
saying and singing what it knew: I can.